

REMARKS

This application is a continuation of USSN 09/300,610, filed April 27, 1999. Another continuation from the '610 application is USSN 09/388,001, filed September 1, 1999. The '001 application was declared to be abandoned in a Notice of Abandonment dated November 21, 2000. In declaring the application abandoned, the Examiner found that there was an insufficient showing that an office action dated March 28, 2000, had been answered. Accordingly, the present application substantially repeats the claims and arguments presented in response to the office action in the '001 application.

In the Office Action dated March 28, 2000, the Examiner applied Cancelleri et al., USP 4,191,729, either alone or in various combinations with Yee et al, USP 3,940,502 or Fatheree, USP 5,013,015, to reject some of the claims of the application. However, many of the claims were deemed to be directed to allowable subject matter. With respect to the allowable claims, the Examiner stated that

"The prior art of record does not suggest semiconductor workpiece processing methods using a yieldable sheath tip which includes a sheath tip rim which splays outwardly upon contacting the workpiece to form a continuous seal".

All of the foregoing claims include the general substance of the subject matter that the Examiner deemed allowable. The claims set forth above further include language that is directed to clarifying amendments that were made to corresponding claims in the '001 application in response to the March 28 office action. The clarifying amendments include the removal of the term "semiconductor", so that the term "workpiece" is consistent throughout the claims. Additionally, the various elements of the electrode and sheath, as well as the interrelationship between them, have

been more clearly set forth as a result of the amendment.

Independent claims 14 and 15 do not directly correspond to any of the claims that were pending in the '001 application. Applicants submit that these claims are likewise allowable over the art of record, taken singly or in combination. Each of these claims includes a sealing member that includes a sealing rim that splays to form a seal that protects an electrode tip that is in electrical contact with a surface of the workpiece. The basic claim elements that distinguish the present invention over the art of record are therefore included in each of these additional claims.

For the foregoing reasons, applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner feels that any further details need to be addressed, he is encouraged to contact Bob Polit at (630) 799-8335 to discuss them.

Respectfully submitted,

BY



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